

Mrs. Douglas replied, that she could not call to mind ever having before had the pleasure of seeing her.

"Most surprising! how romantic!" ejaculated the lady, while Mrs. Douglas was a little at a loss to understand how such terms could be applied to her deficiency of memory. "Then, my dear madam, I will briefly give you a history of my past life, which contains many singular vicissitudes and occurrences. Indeed," she added, in a low tone of voice, "between ourselves; I have serious intentions of writing a novel, of which I shall be the heroine; and I intend to introduce you and your beautiful daughter in it, just as I have found you now. It will make an excellent scene—her employment so appropriate, her style of beauty so *spirituelle*."

Mrs. Douglas did not appear to appreciate this unexpected honor, however she made no remark, while the lady continued:

"Perhaps, Mrs. Douglas, you may remember, in your early days, of a cousin of your deceased, lamented husband, who bore the name of Arabella Carolina Sinclair?"

And here the recollection arose to Mrs. Douglas, of a very romantic, sentimental young lady, with slender figure and raven tresses, who continually talked of poetry, moonlight and Italian skies, whom she with difficulty recognised in the lady who was now seated before her, and whose passion for romance appeared to have survived the days of her youth and the stern realities of life.

"My dear madam," she continued, "you will also recollect, that the person of whom I speak, Miss Arabella Carolina Sinclair, was universally remarked as being a young lady of peculiarly exalted ideas and refined intellect."

Again Mrs. Douglas bowed assent, while the lady continued, speaking no longer of herself as a third person:

"Yes; I will own that I was a singular girl—so *unique* in my notions, so different from the world around me. My spirit disdained to adopt the vulgar opinions which ruled the common mind, and with whose stupid realities I could find no sympathy. For instance, when my acquaintances got married, I felt the utmost contempt for them, when I saw the straight-forward, simple manner in which they conducted their arrangements. No difficulties in the way worth mentioning—no unequal matches—no angry guardians or implacable parents—no stolen interviews or elopements: every thing went on smoothly and stupidly, as if it were merely an every-day occurrence which was about to take place. I, however, with more spirit, was resolved that I should create a sensa-

tion in the world, if ever I should meet a kindred spirit, whose exalted ideas should beat in unison with my own; for, with the bard of Avon, I had ever thought, that

"The course of true love never yet ran smooth."

I also determined, that no ordinary mortal should win my hand. He must be far above the common herd. Such, my dear madam, were my ideas at the age of seventeen years; such, young lady, are doubtless yours. About that time, my father was summoned to London upon business, and, greatly to my delight, I was permitted to accompany him. Shortly after my arrival there, I attended a large assembly, the magnificence of which astonished and delighted me. Several times I beheld among the crowd a graceful figure, whose distinguished appearance and black moustache, completely enchanted me. He was introduced to me as Count De la Rue, and during the remainder of the evening I was his partner. Why need I enlarge upon the subject? We met by appointment. The Count proposed to my father for my hand, and on our bended knees we both implored him to sanction the union. With inexorable firmness, my father refused, unless the count could furnish proof of his right to the title, and could name the particular portion of Lorraine in which his estates were situated. With the pride of a lofty mind, De la Rue scorned to prove that which my father would not believe upon his assertion, and he was refused admittance next time he called. How delightful was all this to me! The realization of all my youthful dreams of romance, which only required an appropriate finale. This, alas! was soon accomplished.

"One night De la Rue appeared under my window with a rope-ladder. My descent was speedily effected. A carriage was in attendance; and after a hasty trip to Gretna-Green, I returned to London Countess De la Rue. Of course, we immediately hastened to my father, quite confident, according to the established termination of novels, to whose rules we had all along adhered, of a reconciliation. You may imagine, my dear madam, how disconcerted the count and I must have been, when, after having congratulated us upon our union, my father very cordially wished us a pleasant honey-moon at our *château* in Lorraine, and coolly bidding us good morning, left the house.

"We were thunderstruck—speechless for a time. At length De la Rue found words to express his indignation against the unjust treatment of my father, and inquired whether I could obtain possession of the handsome fortune which had been laid aside by my father as my marriage portion.